



SELF STIMULATION IN CHILDREN & TEENS

Self-stimulation behaviour is any repetitive body or object movement by the child or teen. This can include masturbation. Sometimes it is not recognized as self stimulation, as the child or teen appears to be staring, rocking, or wiggling.

Self stimulation behaviour can be very distressing for parents. But be assured that it is normal and common for children to learn about their bodies, including their genital area. It is important to teach your children guidelines about when this behaviour is okay. We recommend telling the child it is okay to explore their “private areas” but this has to be done in a private location, such as the bedroom or bathroom.

Discussion with your child about self stimulation of their genitals is also a good opportunity to teach them that it is only okay for immediate family members and doctors (in the presence of family members) to look at or touch their private areas. They should know it is not appropriate for anyone else, including teachers, friends, or strangers, to do this.

Resources for Self Stimulation in Children

Centre for Sexuality is a Calgary agency with advice for talking to their children and teens. Since it's local, you can also call or email for more advice <https://www.centreforsexuality.ca/sexual-health-info/parent%20information/#stages>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has great age-appropriate charts of normal sexuality and what parents can talk about with their child https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//sexual_development_and_behavior_in_children.pdf

Sex Ed Rescue is a website that provides families with tips about talking to their kids about puberty and sexual education, which includes normal sexual behaviours such as self stimulation <https://sexedrescue.com/explaining-sex-education/>

Amazing You! Getting Smart About Your Private Parts by Gail Saltz is a book that speaks to normalcy and privacy and boundaries. There are ebook options available for this book as well.

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